

CLAIMS

Claims 1-21. (Canceled)

Claim 22. (Previously Presented) An electronic commerce system, comprising:

a host, configured for operation by a host owner, suitably adapted for two-way electronic communication between the host owner and a plurality of distributors, each of said plurality of distributors offering an electronic inventory of merchandise comprising discrete items, and said host suitably adapted to issue electronic orders to the plurality of distributors in response to purchase requests received; and

a store builder web site suitably adapted to, in response to a request from a store owner during access to the web site, create an electronic store managed by the host for the store owner, said electronic store to provide each of a plurality of consumers with access, via said distributors, to at least one merchandise item selected from the inventory, the access comprising presentation on one or more web pages to each of the plurality of consumers at the time that the respective consumer accesses the electronic store, and the electronic store configured to support electronic order taking and transactional processing for a plurality of sales transactions directly between respective ones of the plurality of consumers and the store owner; and

wherein the creation of the store comprises, during the access to the store builder web site by the store owner:

receiving one or more selections from the store owner for customization of the appearance of the store;

receiving a store name from the store owner;

presenting to the store owner a plurality of store types for selection in building the store, each of the plurality of store types associated with a different product theme;

receiving from the store owner an identification of a plurality of products to be offered in the store, at least a portion of the plurality of products to be presented to the store owner by the store builder web site for selection by the store owner; and

receiving from the store owner a new URL for access to the store by each of the plurality of consumers.

Claim 23. (Previously Presented) The electronic commerce system of claim 22, wherein said store is customized by at least one of the following selected by the store owner: top and bottom border design, dominant color, font style, store name, slogan, narrative and URL.

Claims 24-28. (Canceled)

Claim 29. (Previously Presented) The electronic commerce system of claim 22 wherein said store sells at least one merchandise item personalized in a manner directed by the store owner.

Claim 30. (Previously Presented) The electronic commerce system of claim 29, wherein said host conducts administrative functions related to the sale of said personalized items.

Claim 31. (Previously Presented) The electronic commerce system of claim 22, wherein said store sells private label items distributed by the store owner in addition to the merchandise items available via the plurality of distributors.

Claim 32. (Previously Presented) The electronic commerce system of claim 31, wherein said host conducts administrative functions related to the sale of said private label items.

Claim 33. (Previously Presented) The electronic commerce system of claim 23, wherein a single store owner owns multiple stores, each with a different URL.

Claim 34. (Previously Presented) The electronic commerce system of claim 33, wherein said host maintains the administration of all of said multiple stores owned by said single store owner.

Claim 35. (Previously Presented) The electronic commerce system of claim 23, wherein said host is not discernable by said consumer.

Claims 36-55. (Canceled)

Claim 56. (Previously Presented) The electronic commerce system of claim 22 wherein the host is further suitably adapted for the host owner to receive payment of a purchase price from the consumer.

Claim 57. (Previously Presented) The electronic commerce system of claim 56 wherein the host is further suitably adapted to make a payment to at least one of the plurality of distributors from the purchase price, to make a payment to the store owner of a commission, and to retain at least a portion of the purchase price as the host owner's profit.

Claim 58. (Canceled)

Claim 59. (Currently Amended) An electronic commerce system, comprising:

a host, configured for operation by a host owner, suitably adapted for two-way electronic communication between the host owner and a plurality of distributors, each of said plurality of distributors offering an electronic inventory of merchandise comprising discrete items, and said host suitably adapted to issue electronic orders to the plurality of distributors in response to purchase requests received;

a store builder web site suitably adapted to, in response to a request from a store owner during access to the web site, create an electronic store managed by the host for the store owner, said electronic store to provide each of a plurality of consumers with access, via said distributors, to at least one merchandise item selected from the inventory, the access comprising presentation on one or more web pages to each of the plurality of consumers at the time that the respective consumer accesses the electronic store, and the electronic store configured to support electronic order taking and transactional processing for a plurality of sales transactions directly between respective ones of the plurality of consumers and the store owner; and

wherein the creation of the store comprises, during the access to the store builder web site by the store owner:

receiving one or more selections from the store owner for customization of the appearance of the store;

receiving a store name from the store owner;

presenting to the store owner a plurality of store types for selection in building the store, each of the plurality of store types associated with a different product theme;

receiving from the store owner an identification of a plurality of products to be offered in the store, at least a portion of the plurality of products to be presented to the store owner by the store builder web site for selection by the store owner; and

receiving from the store owner a new URL for access to the store by each of the plurality of consumers; and

wherein:

the store owner is a first store owner, the store is a first store, and the new URL is a first URL; and

the store builder is further suitably adapted to, in response to a request from a second store owner, create a second store managed by the host for the second store owner, each of the first and second stores to be customized by the respective first and second store owners to offer products for sale by e-commerce, the second store having a second URL to provide the consumer with electronic access to the second store.

Claim 60. (Previously Presented) An electronic commerce system, comprising:

a host, configured for operation by a host owner, suitably adapted for two-way electronic communication between the host owner and a plurality of distributors, each of said plurality of distributors offering an electronic inventory of merchandise comprising discrete items, and said host suitably adapted to issue electronic orders to the plurality of distributors in response to purchase requests received;

a store builder web site suitably adapted to, in response to a request from a store owner during access to the web site, create an electronic store managed by the host for the store owner, said electronic store to provide each of a plurality of consumers with access, via said distributors, to at least one merchandise item selected from the inventory, the access comprising presentation on one or more web pages to each of the plurality of consumers at the time that the respective

consumer accesses the electronic store, and the electronic store configured to support electronic order taking and transactional processing for a plurality of sales transactions directly between respective ones of the plurality of consumers and the store owner; and

wherein the creation of the store comprises, during the access to the store builder web site by the store owner:

receiving one or more selections from the store owner for customization of the appearance of the store;

receiving a store name from the store owner;

presenting to the store owner a plurality of store types for selection in building the store, each of the plurality of store types associated with a different product theme;

receiving from the store owner an identification of a plurality of products to be offered in the store, at least a portion of the plurality of products to be presented to the store owner by the store builder web site for selection by the store owner; and

receiving from the store owner a new URL for access to the store by each of the plurality of consumers.

Claim 61. (Previously Presented) An electronic commerce system, comprising:

a host, configured for operation by a host owner, suitably adapted for two-way electronic communication between the host owner and a plurality of distributors, each of said plurality of distributors offering an electronic inventory of merchandise comprising discrete items, and said host suitably adapted to issue electronic orders to the plurality of distributors in response to purchase requests received;

a store builder web site suitably adapted to, in response to a request from a store owner during access to the web site, create an electronic store managed by the host for the store owner,

said electronic store to provide each of a plurality of consumers with access, via said distributors, to at least one merchandise item selected from the inventory, the access comprising presentation on one or more web pages to each of the plurality of consumers at the time that the respective consumer accesses the electronic store, and the electronic store configured to support electronic order taking and transactional processing for a plurality of sales transactions directly between respective ones of the plurality of consumers and the store owner; and

wherein the creation of the store comprises, during the access to the store builder web site by the store owner:

receiving one or more selections from the store owner for customization of the appearance of the store;

receiving a store name from the store owner;

presenting to the store owner a plurality of store types for selection in building the store, each of the plurality of store types associated with a different product theme;

receiving from the store owner an identification of a plurality of products to be offered in the store, at least a portion of the plurality of products to be presented to the store owner by the store builder web site for selection by the store owner; and

receiving from the store owner a new URL for access to the store by each of the plurality of consumers; and

wherein the host is further suitably adapted so that the operation of the host by the host owner is indiscernible to the consumer.